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dred and twenty-six men of letters covering a period of five hundred years is the only one that could secure expert judgment in every case, while at the same time it affords the student a variety of critical methods almost as great as the variety of the subjects to which it is applied and the different notes are made concordant by the wise restraint of a judicious editor. So these volumes take their place worthily beside Mr. Ward's English Poets, and the critic can accord them no higher praise.

BROOKE'S ENGLISH LITERATURE.¹

Mr. Stopford Brooke is always a delightful writer and one naturally welcomes a new book from him, but it is questionable whether his latest volume will add much to his fame. At first sight one takes it to be another survey of our literature on a little ampler scale than that maintained in the admirable *Primer of English Literature* which won Matthew Arnold's commendation many years ago. One is disappointed, however, to find that it is only an expansion of the *Primer* and one begins to detect—rightly or not—evidence of the joining process. A patched up or padded book is not likely to serve any very good end and we fancy that some people will wish that Mr. Brooke had let his *Primer* remain unaltered. One accepted the limitations of the *Primer* as a matter of course, but will one be as willing to accept the limitations of the enlarged volume? At any rate could not Mr. Brooke have written a short preface describing his method of procedure and justifying it?

We do not wish, however, to detract unduly from the merits of the book. Mr. Brooke's critical taste is nearly always good and his knowledge of his subject is unusually wide; it follows therefore that what he has added will be found useful by many teachers and pupils. The additions, too, that bring the narrative nearer to our own day must be

¹ *English Literature*. By Stopford A. Brooke, M.A. New York and London: The Macmillan Co. 1897.

regarded as distinctly helpful and in keeping with the rest of the original work. But was it necessary for Mr. Brooke to expand the portion relating to our literature before Chaucer? He has, we all know, written quite recently a history of Early English Poetry, but because he knows more than he once did about this phase of the subject is it necessary that the average school-boy should? Would it not have been better, if the text-book was to be altered at all, to bring out more clearly the position of certain minor but genuine poets—for example Matthew Prior? Certainly no school-boy can learn from Mr. Brooke's new book, any more than from his old one, that Prior probably stands at the head of that numerous band of Englishmen who, especially in our own day, have written society verse. Society-verse is not great poetry, but to know something about it is more important to the average youth of 1897 than to be given a page on the five elegies in the *Exeter Book*.

But this question of the proportion of space to be allowed to various authors and various subjects leads to the perennial question of the value of these summary hand-books of the history of literature. We must frankly say that we are by no means convinced of their utility. We much prefer for the average school-boy the method applied by Professor Brander Matthews in his recent volume on American literature—a method which consisted in stressing a few important names and slighting the rest. There is time enough for supplemental information later on in life—it ought to content us if our children appreciate the fact that there are masters of literature and have vague ideas of how they came to be masters. But as long as it is considered proper to make boys and girls take a cursory survey of the entire literature of a productive people like the English, we can at least express the hope that they may be made to take it under the guidance of Mr. Stopford Brooke, whose faults, when they exist are nearly always those of omission rather than of commission.